

Exploring the Relationship Between Learning Motivation and Speaking Skills by Young Learners in An ESL Context

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Abstract

Malaysian ESL learner's learning motivation and speaking skills will be analysed deeply in this research using two samples from a primary school which is located in a sub-urban area at Selangor. Purposive sampling was used in this study to ensure that the participants involved had the information that this study aimed to explore. The researcher used to teach English in SK Seafield 3 located in Subang Jaya. There are various problems faced by the researcher in his teaching career which leads to this research. One of the main problems faced by the researcher is the lack of motivation among the pupils when they are learning English. Although the researcher uses a variety of fun teaching methods because students continue to exhibit a lack of enthusiasm for studying English, particularly when it comes to speaking the language. Other colleagues of the researcher also faced this problem. Therefore, the researcher decided to carry out a deep research to identify how motivation affects the pupils to learn a language.

Keywords: Learning Motivation, Speaking Skills

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the background of this research while focusing on motivation and English language proficiency level, especially speaking skills among the students in Malaysian classroom settings. This research will also introduce the research objectives, research questions, the problem statement, definitions of terms and also the significance of this research and also discuss issues pertaining to this research and the importance of this research to the body of knowledge. This study is mainly conducted to identify the pupils' motivation level of learning English in the classroom and also to identify pupils' speaking proficiency in English language. For this research to be conducted successfully, first the researcher has to identify what is the respondent's motivation to learn and speak in the English language, whether the pupils are motivated intrinsically, extrinsically, instrumentally or integratively. Pupils' type of motivation in enriching the English language by using targeted language can be identified through their responses from the interview and by observing their learning behaviour in the classroom. Thus, this paper is to record the findings of a pilot study

based on Malaysian learners' learning motivation and speaking skills, especially using six samples from a primary school which is located in a sub-urban area at Selangor.

Literature Review

Motivation

Language learning motivation has always been a crucial topic of discussion in Malaysian classrooms. The key issue for this topic that has always been raised is the diminishing English language proficiency and literacy among school leavers even after studying English for eleven years in schools. The Ministry of Education (2019), also stated that motivation is very essential for ESL learners in Malaysia to acquire a second language and also to improve their proficiency in the English language when Malaysia's English Language Education Reform was first introduced: The Roadmap, 2015-2025 by (Azman, 2016).

In addition, language proficiency is a comprehensive element which is inclusive of 4 main skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils in Malaysia face various challenges in learning English. The declining proficiency in the English language is a topic of frequent discussion, as it appears to be getting worse every day. Most of the time pupils lose interest and enthusiasm to learn English due to negative feelings such as low self-confidence and esteem, anxiety, teacher's harsh and discouraging attitude and psychologically insecure classroom atmospheres. This condition further worsens the already diminishing English language proficiency by further tarnishing pupils' motivation.

Speaking Skill

Besides that, the teachers encountered communication and linguistic issues in the classroom (Khalid, 2018). Pupils from different backgrounds with different learning styles will make the education process go tougher where the teachers have to explain in many ways to make a student understand better.

This problem seems like a common occurrence throughout the nation. The most recent study by Rao (2019) shows that students who enrolled in Malaysian universities still have anxiety and lack of motivation to speak in English. In a normal classroom situation, a pupil ideally should have high motivation to speak English. But the lack of motivation among pupils nowadays is alarming. If this trend continues, the probability of the deterioration of English language among school pupils will be inevitable. The researcher uses a variety of teaching methods gathered around the pupils' learning style to resolve this issue; But the pupils do not show much motivation to speak English. Thus, the researcher decided to explore pupils' level of motivation to speak English in the classroom.

Challenges of Malaysian Teachers

The researcher further observed the pupils in his school and found out this situation happens in almost all of the ESL classrooms. Thus, to further study the situation the researcher decided to carry out research to explore the role of motivation in learning the English language.

According to S. Rasheedha Rajathurai (2017) As far as we know, students study English for 11 to 12 years in primary and secondary school. Despite this, a significant number of them still struggle with the language after finishing secondary school. There are several reasons for this, but one of the primary ones is the students' own lack of desire to study English which also can be evidenced through a survey conducted by Hasan, D. C. (2014) stating that different factors such as social, gender, locality, background and also their prior knowledge also affects the motivation for learning a second language.

The tendency of the Malaysian students' to be more instrumental than integrative motivated to learn English is also evident in several other Asian communities, according to a study, which also found a significant relationship between students' metacognitive awareness and motivation and academic achievement (Ming et al., 2011). Even the most talented people struggle to achieve long-term goals in the absence of proper motivation, and good teaching methods and acceptable curricula are not enough to guarantee student success.

Thus, this is another area where the researcher finds that students in Malaysian ESL schools lack enthusiasm to learn English. Pupils are not curious enough to acquire a language even though an educator uses a variety of fun teaching methods the pupils still show lack of motivation in learning English specially to speak the language. This problem seems like a common occurrence throughout the nation. The most recent study by Rao (2019) shows that students who enrolled in Malaysian universities still have anxiety and lack of motivation to speak in English. In a normal classroom situation, a pupil ideally should have high motivation to speak English. But the lack of motivation among pupils nowadays is alarming. If this trend continues, the probability of the deterioration of English language among school pupils will be inevitable. 90% of the students who took part in the survey felt that pupils are more likely to be motivated when teachers create realistic learning objectives and explain why they are involved in the activity and what it is meant to accomplish (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016) but in some cases even when a teacher uses variety of teaching methods which gather around the pupils' learning style will not resolve this issue entirely. Pupils do not show much motivation to speak English in some cases. In other words, local academics also agree that anxiety in language classes is bad for Malaysian students' English proficiency (Ghazali et al., 2020). The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 of Higher Education states where language learning anxiety is out of alignment with the government's aim and contributes to students' poor English proficiency especially in speaking up English Language. The blueprint was created in 2013 to keep Malaysia's educational system current with world trends and to assist in preparing Malaysia's youth for the fast evolving future. The government's goal for widespread bilingual competency among the populace is one of the highlights. Therefore, knowing the different types of anxiety in ESL classrooms is important for individualised pedagogical intervention attempts. Sometimes the anxiety also can demotivate a student to practice this second language verbally in daily conversations.

Since other Malaysian studies have shown that this is a widespread phenomenon among Malaysian students, the issue of students being more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated cannot be easily solved (Ming et al., 2011). Therefore, the researcher further observed the pupils in his school and found out this situation happens in almost all of the ESL classrooms. Thus, to further study the situation the researcher decided to carry out research to investigate how motivation affects learning English.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research uses narrative qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2014), narrative qualitative method seeks to investigate and interpret how the human experience is portrayed in literature. Narrative researchers work with small samples of participants to acquire rich and free-ranging conversation, with the goal of delving deeply into the meanings people attribute to their experiences.

In short, interviews are asked in the form of questions in order to gauge narrative or storytelling among respondents to get an insight on a pupil's motivation in learning and

speaking English as a language in their classroom. This method is proven useful in the cases of understanding the motivation to speak in English on a personal basis. By understanding the stories from a personal point of view a better conclusion of how the driving motivation of the respondent can be achieved.

Population and Sampling

Particularly 6 respondents are chosen from 160 pupils chosen using purposive sampling for this study. According to Ekiz (2016) purposive sampling, sometimes referred to as judgment sampling, involves selecting participants specifically based on their attributes. It is a non-random strategy that does not require a predetermined sample size or underlying theory. Apart from their own expertise and experience, the researcher determines what information is required and searches for sources who can and will share their knowledge or experience. To make the most efficient use of the resources, it is frequently used in qualitative research to identify and select the instances with a lot of information.

For the purpose of this research, the two respondents chosen for this research are year 6 students from SK Seafield 3. These respondents are chosen because the researchers had consents to interview and as well as observe them studying from their guardians. Since the observation is done in both school and home settings, it is pivotal for the researcher to get the written consent from the parents. Article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that getting parental consent is required in order to gain the consent of a kid participant. This offers the parent or guardian the chance to find out more about the study, ask questions, and accept or reject their child's involvement in the study and also to protect the sanctity of the research consent forms were given to both parents and respondents.

Instrumentation

Generally, Tests, surveys, interviews, classroom observations, diaries, and notebooks are just a few of the methods used to gather data. Interviews are often used in qualitative designs to collect, process, and interpret data (Birmingham, 2003). The researcher plans to use three instruments which are semi-structured interview, observations and document analysis in this study.

After the interview the audio of the interview is transcribed to analyse the data. The chosen respondent's interview, which was conducted in bilingual, was translated and turned into a transcript. The codes from the interview were highlighted and tabulated. Then, codes will be grouped together to form the themes of the interview. In addition, the observation data were gathered and tabulated using the observational checklist provided. The recurring themes were analysed while corresponding to the interview and observation. Finally, more literary reviews will be added to support the data collected from both of the instruments used.

Results and Discussions

Pupils' motivation level of learning English in the classroom

Respondent 1 is 12 years old; a Malay boy who uses English as a major language of communication in his family. According to the observation checklist, the respondent has an increased level of internal motivation compared to extrinsic motivation to master English in the classroom. According to the checklist of intrinsic motivation; he likes challenges in learning English. The respondent also has a very high curiosity level where both the teacher and the parent observing him mentioned that the respondent always asks questions while

learning English. Apart from that the respondent lacks independent mastery as he only showcased one behavior observed via the checklist which was doing homework on their own.

Data finding also shows that the respondent shows lack of extrinsic motivation. The teacher observing the respondent stated that the respondent shows no tendency to easy work, meanwhile the parent observation shows that the respondent exhibits one item under the theme ease work: he likes easy homework. Both parent and teacher agree that the respondent doesn't learn English to please the teacher. They also did not find any behavior that shows the respondent depends on the teacher to facilitate his learning.

The data collected from the observation checklist can be triangulated with the semi-structured interview where the respondent stated that he uses multiple resources to learn English such as phone, dictionary, books, and while surfing the internet to find the meaning of difficult words. Thus, showing that mastery learning an element of intrinsic motivation is present within him. He also stated that he is highly motivated to learn English as he is intrinsically motivated to get better at the language. This feeling is deep rooted because as a child he stated that he had an experience with verbal bullying, teasing by his cousins because he makes grammar mistakes when he speaks English. Since the cousins only use English in their household, they inherently have better speaking skills than the respondent thus leading to a situation where when he tries to speak with them in English, the cousins tease him.. That could be the cause of his statement that speaking is his most valuable skill. Since he doesn't want to embarrass himself in front of his cousins again.

Pupils' speaking proficiency of English language

Respondent 1:

Based on the interview conducted, this respondent has a high degree of instrumental motivation. According to the interview carried out the respondent strongly believes that learning English will be substantial for his future job. He stated that he wants to be a police officer and added that speaking English will not affect his job perspective. But in order for him to land the job, he believes he has to pass English exams. In terms of short-term goals, he stated that he is learning English now to pass his examination. His instrumental motivation is also transformed into action, where he stated that he attends tuition to pass his examination and he only likes to do English quizzes online.

Next, the respondent also exhibits a higher degree of integrative motivation through the interview. The respondent wishes to enhance his English speaking skills; so that he could communicate better with his cousins and friends. It is evident through the interview that the respondent is learning to increase his speaking skills in order to communicate properly with his classmates. The respondent shared his most pleasant memory in speaking English in the ESL classroom where he has teamed up with his classmates to do group work. Even completing worksheets and participating in some 'speaking' activities such as role-play is enjoyable if he does it together with his friends. He also mentioned that he always helps his classmates in speaking the language when they are stuck with some words. This shows that the respondent tries to create a better relationship with his classmates in an ESL classroom. The respondent also identifies English as a global language and stated that it's important when he travels around the world later, indicating he has to use English to communicate in foreign countries.

Based on the classroom based assessment shared by the respondent's teacher, this respondent managed to get Band 5 in his English: Band '5' for speaking, Band 5 for reading, Band 5 for listening and Band 4 for writing. The respondent has a high degree of intrinsic, integrative and instrumental motivation and low level of extrinsic motivation and he has high motivation for speaking the language. Thus, showing that having high self-efficacy and a goal to learn and speak English helps this respondent to get better scores in English assessments.

Respondent 2:

Based on the interview carried out by the second respondent, he does not show a high degree of instrumental motivation. Through the interview the respondent only stated that his goal to learn English is passing the exam and further added that passing the test is the short-term objective; achieving the goal is the long-term goal. This shows that the respondent does not have a clear goal for learning English. The respondent is still uncertain about his ambition but for the time being his ambition is to be a police officer and he believed English language proficiency insubstantial for his future job.

The semi-structured interview found out that the respondent has a high degree of integrative motivation. Through his interview, this respondent shares his story about isolation that he feels at school. Although he has a decent level of the English language speaking skill; he stated that he has some issues with his classmates. He stated that his classmates isolate him by picking him last in any classroom activities. He feels that the classmates are being rude and unkind to him since he is newly transferred to the school. According to Thompson (2017) his dissatisfaction towards his peers is a common symptom of those who want to be a part of the community that they are dissatisfied with. Thus, showing that this respondent has high integrative motivation to be a part of his classroom clique in ESL classroom. He also shows signs of fear towards his teacher where he was hesitant to answer the question of whether he will greet his English teacher when he happens to meet him outside school. The respondent first says yes after a long silence, but soon changes his answer to 'no' when the researcher confides that the interview results are confidential. The fear or discomfort he feels towards his teacher will affect his motivation to get proficient in speaking English.

Based on the classroom based assessment shared by the teacher, the respondent managed to get Band 4 for his English: '4' for speaking, 3 for listening, 3 for writing and 4 for reading. Meanwhile, the respondent has a high degree of extrinsic and integrative motivation and a very low level of intrinsic and instrumental motivation. This clearly shows that the respondent relies on external elements like his friends, parents, and teachers to facilitate and invest in improving his English language speaking skills.

Table 2

Summary of Observational Checklist

ITEMS	RESPONDENT 1	RESPONDENT 2
Intrinsic	High	Low
Extrinsic	Low	High
Instrumental	Very high	Very Low
Integrative	Very high	High
English Speaking skill	Band 5	Band 4

The analysis of data from the observational checklist, semi-structured interview and document analysis demonstrates the two respondents' levels of motivation and how motivation affects how they use the English language. The first respondent shows a high level of motivation and has a higher proficiency in speaking English whereas the second respondent shows an average level of motivation and proclaims a high proficiency level of speaking the English language.

Data analysis is the process of turning the collected data into meaningful information (Taherdoost, 2022). So, it is found out that respondent one has a high level of motivation and a high level of English language proficiency meanwhile respondent two has an average level of motivation and high level of English language speaking skills which shows clearly on the data analysis of this research. This study concluded that the level of motivation has no direct effect on speaking in the English language in these particular respondents.

Implication of Research

This research will be very helpful for the English teachers in SK Seafield 3 or any other school with students from similar backgrounds. They will be able to refer to this research to know the motivation of the pupils which will help them to prepare better plans to motivate the pupils. The teachers will be able to know what are the most common types of motivation that the respondents share thus will be able to motivate them accordingly to participate more actively in their classroom activities. For example, if the pupils have high extrinsic motivation, the teachers can provide simple gifts, rewards or more verbal praises as a motivator for the pupils.

This research will mostly help the students. Students will be able to determine whether or not their motivation actually contributes to their improved English grades. along with their motivation and the reasons behind their attendance at school. The answers to these questions will enable the students to have a clearer understanding of the nature and intensity of their desire for studying English. Understanding their motivation will enable them to devise a strategy for enhancing their drive to speak more fluently.

Recommendations for Future Research

This is an exciting topic for aspiring researchers to investigate. This study must be completed in its entirety because the outcome solely depends on the motivation of the students to speak the target language. The outcomes can serve as a reference and a source of data for additional studies. There are a few tips for future researchers that wants to conduct this study. Firstly, they can integrate some technology to get in-dept findings for this research by examining how gamified learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and language learning apps can improve student motivation and have an effect on their ability to communicate mainly in English Language.

Furthermore, future researchers can also study more on the parental and socioeconomic influences which affects pupil's English Language communication. Researchers can examine how socioeconomic status and involvement from parents affect young ESL learners' motivation levels and speaking abilities by analysing the relationships that exist between these outside variables and internal drive.

Through investigating these paths, the researchers may enhance our grasp of the manners in which motivation impacts the ability to speak among young ESL students and provide educators and policymakers with important information to improve language learning encounters.

Conclusion

Learning the relationship between motivation and speaking skills by young learners in an ESL context is the primary goal of this research. There are various factors that influence the degree of motivation of learners in acquiring a second language. Teachers also encountered complexities in classroom settings as a result of students' low levels of proficiency and their own lack of knowledge in teaching English skills, especially speaking skill, which could be identified from this research in terms of teaching and learning issues that sub-urban area school teachers face (Taherdoost, 2022). Thus, this also could be clearly identified through this research. Thus, further studies could be conducted to analyze what are the other factors that influence English language speaking skills among these respondents. This research will be proven to be helpful to the participants as they will be able to identify their type of motivation and choose a learning technique which suits them well. Other social issues faced by the respondents should also be addressed to learn how these personal experiences change their level of motivation in speaking the targeted language. In a nutshell, this study believes students who are driven to study succeed more than those who are not motivated to learn, highlighting the significance of motivation for speaking a second language in the modern age.

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